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ABSTRACT

The question of how the abilities of teacher educators can be identified and what these abilities should be is addressed. The following five ways of identifying abilities are discussed: (1) performing a task analysis of what teacher educators do; (2) determining what effective classroom teachers do and preparing teacher educators to produce teachers who do those things; (3) determining what classroom teachers do in certain selected settings and preparing teacher educators who can produce teachers effective in those settings; (4) soliciting teacher educator abilities from teacher educators themselves; and (5) culling ideas about the education of teacher educators from theorists. The prime objective of this research is to produce teachers with abilities that will promote desired pupil outcomes. (JD)

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Toward Identifying the Abilities of Teacher Educators

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Abstract

The primary purpose of the paper is to begin to answer the question, how can the abilities of teacher educators be identified? A second intention is to present a position regarding what the abilities should be.

Five ways are enumerated whereby the abilities of teacher educators can be determined. They are (1) performing a task analyses of what teacher educators do, (2) determining what effective classroom teachers do and preparing teacher educators to produce teachers who do those things, (3) determining what classroom teachers do in special settings with special organizational patterns or curricula and preparing teacher educators who can produce teachers for those settings, (4) soliciting teacher educator abilities from teacher educators themselves and (5) culling ideas about the education of teacher educators from theorists.

A position is taken that supports the preparation of teacher educators who can produce teachers who bring about student gain and satisfaction. Accepting this position, the necessary abilities of teacher educators are cited as threefold. First they must know what kinds of pupil gain and satisfaction are desired in schools. Second they must know what kinds of teacher abilities cause the

desired pupil gain and satisfaction to occur. Finally, they should know how teachers can best gain the abilities that promote the desired pupil outcomes.

TOWARD IDENTIFYING THE ABILITIES OF TEACHER EDUCATORS

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Teacher educators are the largest subgroup of the education professoriate. As the largest they are also the most influential, directly or indirectly affecting the values and behavior of over two million classroom teachers. Given their numbers and influence it could be expected that much is known about them and about their preparation. Such is not the case. Lack of knowledge about teacher educators and their preparation is evident from a search of the literature.

Since knowledge of teacher educators and of their preparation is so little developed, it provides a rich field for inquiry. Among the questions that could be pursued are the following:

What should be the goals of the education of teacher educators?

What should constitute the curriculum for teacher educators?

How should teacher educators be educated?

How can the education of teacher educators be valued?

Who should be a teacher educator? And,

How can the continuing growth of teacher educators be ensured?

The primary purpose of this paper is to begin to answer a related question, How can the abilities of teacher educators be identified? A second intention is to present a position regarding what the abilities should be. Hopefully the suggestions provided for use in identifying abilities of teacher educators and the position taken regarding what they should be will result in increased interest in the education of teacher educators.

How can the abilities of teacher educators be identified?

There are several ways whereby the abilities of teacher educators can be determined. Five will be presented and discussed briefly.

1. Perform a task analysis of what teacher educators do and then prepare novices or improve the competence of practicing teacher educators in these things. An assumption here is that what teacher educators do is a good model to continue. This approach would provide a mapping of current teacher educator practices from which the abilities of teacher educators would need to be inferred. For example if a task of teacher educators is to supervise school experiences then inferences regarding requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes would need to be made.

2. Identify primary and secondary teachers who bring about pupil learning. Determine what they do in order to bring about pupil learning. Prepare teacher educators so they can produce teachers who do the same things. Assumptions here include that pupil learning is important and that teachers can and should be accountable for preparing teachers who beget pupil achievement. This approach would provide a mapping of what "effective" teachers do and would cause teacher educators to be competent in developing such abilities in preservice and inservice teachers. For example if effective teachers--those who bring about pupil learning--are enthusiastic, then teacher educators must have the ability to prepare teachers who can demonstrate that quality when teaching.

3. Accept that teachers should be prepared for particular kinds

of schools with particular kinds of programs (e.g. IPI) and prepare teacher educators to ready them for such settings. Some assumptions here are that teachers should be prepared to teach particularly rather than generally, that teacher educators should be prepared to bring about specialized abilities in teachers, and that the requisite teacher educator abilities in teachers, are or can be known. This approach would provide a mapping of abilities needed by teacher educators to prepare teachers for specialized roles; for example as a teacher in an informal classroom, a teacher of Man a Course of Study or a teacher of dyslexic children.

4. Solicit teacher educator abilities from teacher educators themselves. As with the first approach, this one accepts that what exists is a good model to continue. An advantage of this approach is that it involves the perceptions of teacher educators themselves thus permitting them to play a role in designing the curriculum. To put this procedure into practice, staff members can be asked to describe their needs and the degree to which the needs are not satisfied, thus creating a problem. Analysis and discussion of the perceived needs of teacher educators provides a mapping of the abilities they feel they lack most.

5. Cull ideas about the education of teacher educators from theorists, those who are attempting to understand the phenomenon of graduate teacher education. In this case the assumption is that those who have studied and thought most about the phenomenon are best able to provide guidance. A report of the perceptions of theorists was

contained in a special issue of the journal Theory Into Practice published in June 1974. Therein it was reported that, among other things, teacher educators should:

(a) have knowledge of the problems of practice [teaching] since professional knowledge must be known and organized around them,

(b) and have knowledge from the behavioral sciences which helps practicing teachers or teachers-to-be to analyze and interpret problems of practice.

Decisions regarding which, if any, of the five above-mentioned approaches to take when working toward identifying the abilities of teacher educators can be based on several questions. The first question can be, Who should participate in the process of identifying the abilities? Persons who observe and record practices of teacher educators? R and D persons who do research on teaching and subsequently prescribe how they should be prepared? Teachers and other school personnel who, because they work in schools, feel they know what teacher educators must be able to do? Or teacher educators themselves?

A second question can be, Should teacher educators be able to prepare teachers universally or particularly? Should they try to prepare teachers good everywhere or good, for example, in inner-city schools?

Another interesting and related question is whether they should be able to prepare teachers for all curriculum programs or selected ones. For example should the elementary science teacher educator be

able to prepare teachers for science teaching generally or AAAS particularly.

Until now an effort has been made to provide a frame of reference regarding how the abilities of teacher educators might be identified. Next, one of the alternative ways for determining the abilities of teacher educators is accepted, a premise is made and a position is developed.

A position regarding what the abilities of teacher educators should be.

If primary and secondary teachers are to bring about pupil gain and pupil satisfaction, then teacher educators should be expected to develop those abilities in them. Accepting this premise, the necessary abilities of teacher educators seem to be threefold. First they must know what kinds of pupil gain and satisfaction are promoted. Next they must know what teacher abilities cause the desired pupil outcomes. Finally they must know how teachers can best gain the abilities which promote the desired pupil outcomes. The preparation of the teacher educator should take all of these things into account.

In order to find out what kinds of pupil gain and satisfaction are sought, teacher educators should regularly have some relationship with the variety of kinds of schools and school programs that exist. Further they should read about alternative forms of schooling and curricula in order to understand them. Failure to keep in touch with life in classrooms is a serious problem for the majority of teacher educators. Many American state accreditation bodies are beginning to mandate such experience. Ohio's new state regulations, for example,

caution:

> Each member of the professional education faculty shall. . . maintain a current and knowledgeable relationship with elementary and secondary schools.

Teacher educators must find ways to determine what kinds of student gain and satisfaction are sought. A few approaches that come to mind include: school visits, teaching or assisting a teacher during a university break, exchange teaching, and conducting research in classrooms. Professor Jack Hough at Ohio State University pursued a most unusual way. He sat in an open-space school for three months and did everything that the pupils did. Most of these experiences would enable teacher educators to focus on the outcomes of education--to know what is expected of pupils.

Aware of the knowledge, skills and attitudes expected of pupils, a second ability of the teacher educator is to know what teacher abilities cause such learnings to occur. Consider the math educator. She must ask herself, How can mathematics be taught so that the desired knowledge, skills, and attitudes will result? or, What do teachers do who maximize pupil gain and satisfaction in mathematics? Such knowledge is slippery. What appears to be a promising teaching practice in a particular setting with a particular task often does not work in another setting or with another task. Consider the teaching of reading in second and fifth grades. In research conducted by Berliner and others at the Far West Lab it was found that a promising teaching practice at one grade level was not always a promising practice at another. Compared to successful second grade teachers, successful fifth grade teach-

ers utilized peer teaching, did less drilling, and used less non-verbal behavior to control or change pupil behavior.

Teacher educators must find ways to come to know what teacher abilities cause desired pupil outcomes. Some of the ways this can be done are by; careful observation of teachers who are most successful in bringing about student gain and satisfaction in different settings with different tasks, and by reading the literature on research on teaching. In the latter regard, the reviews of research by Rosenshine and Furst and Dunkin and Biddle come to mind.

The third ability of teacher educators related to the initial premise is that they should know how teachers can best gain the abilities which promote the desired pupil outcomes. Suppose, as Rosenshine and Furst claim, that teachers who beget the most student achievement are clear, variable, enthusiastic and so forth. How do we make them so? In order to answer this question, teacher educators must be aware of the variety of instructional alternatives available for use in teacher education. They include first, second and third hand experiences with reality or models of reality. Not only must the teacher educator have knowledge of the instructional alternatives, but he must have skill in their use. He must also be willing to experiment with the alternatives to determine which of them is most likely to result in student learning for a given task. Suppose the ability the teacher education student is to learn is "clarity". Can that ability best be learned with a first, second or third hand experience with reality or with a model of it? Further, which of the alternatives in

which of the cells is most promising?

In summary, given the premise that primary and secondary teachers are to bring about student gain and student satisfaction and that teacher educators should be expected to develop those abilities in them, then:

1. they must know what kinds of pupil gain and satisfaction are promoted,
2. they must know what teacher abilities cause the desired pupil outcomes and
3. they must know how teachers can best gain the abilities which promote the desired pupil outcomes.

Obviously other premises could be taken and examined which are based upon another way of determining the abilities of teacher educators. Naturally, some of them would account for the present preparation of teachers and teacher educators. The vast majority of American teacher preparation programs are based upon a curriculum model extrapolated from the Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. Accepting this model and the premises upon which it may be based would suggest that teacher educators have the abilities to promote outcomes in the areas of

1. the Humanistic and Behavioral Studies,
2. the Teaching and Learning Theory component and
3. Student Teaching.

There are probably nearly as many variations for teacher education as there are colleges and universities preparing teachers. The

task of teacher educators is to make clear their values and build their programs on them. The identification of the requisite abilities of teacher educators should be a normal outgrowth.

Hopefully this short paper has made it clear that there are alternative ways to determine the abilities of the teacher educator and that the selection of a way is a value judgment. Education at any level is never morally neutral. Whatever the approach taken, followed to a reasoned conclusion, the result will be better graduate or inservice teacher educator education.

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